

Mansfield's Plan for Young Children

Updated August 2013



Cover photo of Mansfield barn courtesy of Art Kostapapas

“A person’s a person No matter how small”

- Dr. Seuss

This is a plan, developed by the Mansfield community, to improve the lives of our children ages birth through eight and their families. The original plan, completed in 2009, involved eleven months of in-depth data analysis, community input from more than 527 residents, passionate conversations, and creative thinking. **Over the past year, we have revised the Plan to: (1) incorporate new data; (2) report an early implementation of strategies; and (3) update strategies based on new data and lessons learned in early implementation.**

The plan begins with the overarching desired result: that **Mansfield’s children from birth through eight years old are healthy, successful learners, and their families are connected to the community.** The plan then identifies three strategic areas on which to focus its efforts: (1) health; (2) successful learners; and (3) community connectedness.

In each of these three areas, the community has selected headline indicators which contain the major data points from which results will be measured. For **health**, the headline indicators are the percent of children passing all four physical fitness tests in Grade 4 and the percent of children with healthy BMI scores. For **successful learners**, the headline indicators are the percent of children scoring at Level 3 on the Kindergarten Inventory and the percent of third graders reading at or above the State goal level on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). For **community connectedness**, the indicator is the percent of community members feeling connected to the community. Because this data point did not exist in 2009, the initial strategy was to collect this information via a community survey. Our updated Plan includes survey results and updated strategies.

The data for each headline indicator – as well as secondary indicators and additional details behind some of the data points – are included to paint the picture of what the current status is in Mansfield. From this information, strategies and activity ideas were generated to move the plan forward. A list of partners, an initial resource plan, and performance measures that correlate with each of the strategies are included in this plan.

Mansfield Advocates for Children (MAC), who is the governance group for early childhood initiatives in Mansfield, assumed responsibility for implementing this plan. This required expanding MAC membership to include some members of the Leadership Work Group and additional partners. Further, this plan was presented to the Town Council as a demonstration project for the Early Care and Education component of the Mansfield 2020 Plan.

Of utmost importance, though, is the recognition that this updated plan continues to be a work in progress; it is a living document. We will continue to work with all of our community partners to collectively deepen our planning efforts, take on actions that genuinely will turn the curve for our children, and hold ourselves accountable for the progress that we make.

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our warmest acknowledgements to the following individuals and organizations that contributed to this plan for Mansfield's youngest children.

Leadership

This plan was developed with the leadership and support of both the Town of Mansfield and the Mansfield Board of Education.

Funding

The planning effort was funded by the Governor's Early Childhood Education Cabinet through the State Department of Education and the William C. Graustein Memorial Fund. The Town of Mansfield provided additional in-kind support.

Planning Teams and Work Groups

A Leadership Work Group was formed in 2008 to develop the original Plan, with many individuals helping to develop the Plan (see 2009 Plan for details).

In the winter of 2011, a retreat led by Phyllis Rozansky helped MAC members to confirm the headline indicators. After the retreat, the three strategic teams began the work of data collection and analysis to further affirm and pinpoint the needs of the community. In 2012-13 the Plan underwent an extensive rewrite with the help of Cross Sector Consulting. The following individuals contributed their time, talents, expertise, and leadership at various points to update this plan for Mansfield's children:

Sara Anderson, Parent
Fred Baruzzi, Superintendent of Mansfield Public Schools
Gloria Bent, UCC, First Church of Mansfield
Anne Bladen, Center Director
Ande' Bloom, Eastern Highlands Health District Education Coordinator
Terry Cook, Community member
Jill Coghlan, Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis (CCEA)
Lisa Dahn, Center Director
Susan Daley, Center Director
Sarah Delia, Administrative Assistant, Early Childhood Services
Vicky Fry, Parent
Jane Goldman, University of Connecticut Early Childhood Professor
Cindy Guerrieri, William C. Graustein Memorial Fund Community Liaison
Kevin Grunwald, Town of Mansfield Director of Human Services
Jessica Higham, Parent
Yu Jin Kim, Community member
Kathleen Krider, Early Childhood Services Coordinator
Mark LaPlaca, Chairman of the Board of Education
Rachel Leclerc, Director of Special Education
Mary Jane Newman, Center Director
Esther Soffer Roberts, Parent
Judith Stoughton, Mansfield Public Library Children's Librarian
Bill Waite, Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis (CCEA)
Lisa Young, Mansfield Discovery Depot

Community Members

A special appreciation is extended to the more than 500 members of the community who provided their input into this plan by completing input surveys, participating in focus groups, engaging in conversations with the Leadership Work Group, and contributing ideas to improve the plan.

Photographs

A special thanks to Art Kostapapas, of the ERA Covenant Realty Group, and Karen Taylor who contributed Mansfield photographs to this publication.



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1. About this Plan

In June 2008, Mansfield was provided with the opportunity to come together to develop a plan that would improve the lives of its young children and their families. The Mansfield community received a grant jointly funded by the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet through the State Department of Education and the William C. Graustein Memorial Fund to develop a community plan to improve the success of Mansfield's young children – from birth through age eight – and their families.

Through this process, we set out to create a comprehensive plan to address the needs of our young children and their families. It would not focus on any discrete program or school, but instead would be a community-wide and system-wide approach. Further, when Mansfield took on this planning effort, we committed to extensive and representative involvement of community members. We also agreed to using concrete data as a starting point for decisions and using Results-Based Accountability (RBA) which is a planning process that intensively focuses on results and accountability. Finally, we committed to building in no- or low-cost activities for at least two years, in recognition of our economic climate.

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and their families.**

In addition, this plan was developed to align with the Mansfield 2020 Plan, a strategic planning effort led by the Mansfield Mayor and Town Council to define a strategic direction for the future of the Town and to establish the basis for decision-making and resource allocation until the year 2020.

Mansfield Advocates for Children (MAC), the governance group for early childhood initiatives in Mansfield, formed a Leadership Work Group to guide this planning process. The Leadership Work Group was formed in June 2008 and was intended to be representative of the field – including parents, early care and education professionals, community programs and services representatives, and other interested community members.

In order to make sure that the blueprint plan corresponds to the most significant challenges in the community, we collected relevant quantitative data to identify these needs, including information about the community context, information about early care and education efforts, and the supports that exist for our families with young children. Community input was sought through a wide variety of means – including presentations, one-on-one interviews, focus groups with relevant organizations community-wide, and surveys from 527 Mansfield residents and stakeholders.

In 2012-13, MAC updated the Plan to incorporate new data (particularly the community survey) and strategies for achieving our desired result for children and families. For those familiar with the 2009 Plan, we have included most of the original Plan content throughout Section 4. To facilitate review of updated information, we highlight New and Updated Data, Revised Strategies, Implementation Progress, and Areas for Future Development.

2. About Our Process

When Mansfield took on this planning effort, it also took on the opportunity to use a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) community planning framework. RBA is a disciplined way of taking action to improve the quality of life in communities and show results. The intent of RBA is to help communities bring public and private sectors together to turn around conditions that are “not okay.” The process begins by identifying what result we want to achieve, and then works backwards to arrive at the specific actions that will achieve that result. The RBA process is as follows:

Step 1: What is our desired result?

The first step of an RBA plan identifies what quality-of-life condition we want to achieve for our families with young children. RBA results are stated in plain language, in a way that every taxpayer and voter can understand the issue and see its importance. Examples include “a prosperous economy” or “a safe community.”

Step 2: What would these conditions look like if we could see them?

The second step is to identify the possible indicators that will quantify whether we have achieved our result. For example, the unemployment rate helps quantify our local economic prosperity and crime rate helps quantify the safety of our community.

Step 3: How can we measure these conditions?

The third step reduces the list of possible indicators down into those that are the most representative of the result we seek to achieve.

Step 4: How are we doing and what is the story behind the curve?

The fourth step analyzes current data and recent trends for these top indicators and asks how the community is currently performing on them. During this step, we also work hard to identify the story behind the curve – including the root causes of these current trends.

Step 5: Who are the partners who have a role in doing better?

The fifth step identifies all of the potential partners who can contribute to making the numbers better.

Step 6: What strategies will turn the curve?

The sixth step develops our strategies and actions to improve these conditions. These strategies are based on what we know works (from research and best practices) and common-sense approaches.

Step 7: What do we propose to do?

The seventh step lays out the precise actions that will bring the results that are desired. These actions include no-cost and low-cost efforts.

Performance Measures

After developing our plan, we collectively work with our partners to select the most important measures that we all agree to track and to which we hold ourselves accountable.

For more information on RBA, see Mark Friedman’s book [Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough](#) or websites (www.raguide.org / www.resultsaccountability.com).

3. About Mansfield

Mansfield, Connecticut is a rural town in Tolland County with a population of approximately 26,500 in 5,586 households.¹ However, it tends to feel like a smaller town than the numbers suggest because the population figures include UConn students that reside in the town. The town is approximately 4 miles north of Willimantic, 25 miles east of Hartford, and 33 miles north of New London. Major access to the town is made by Interstate 84, via Route 44 and Route 6.

History: The town of Mansfield was incorporated in 1702. It was originally part of a land tract acquired from the Mohegans by a group of Norwich settlers. Mansfield remained a predominantly rural town. The rivers powered saw mills and grist mills, and the town was influenced by nearby Willimantic's role in the thread and textile industries. In 1810, the first silk mill in the United States was built at Hanks Hill and for many years Mansfield led the country in silk production. Today, Mansfield is home to the University of Connecticut's main campus in Storrs, which fosters a vibrant culture of education in the town.

Government: Mansfield operates with a Council-Manager form of government.

Economic base: The median household income in \$62,064, just below the State average of \$67,236. The top four major employers are strong institutional players, including the University of Connecticut, Mansfield Public Schools, Regional School District #19, and Natchaug Hospital.²

Young children: In 2010, Mansfield had 572 children under the age of five and 651 school-aged children ages 5-9.³ Mansfield has three elementary schools: Dorothy C. Goodwin School, the Southeast School, and the Annie E. Vinton School.

Quality of life: Mansfield residents enjoy certain amenities in town that contribute to their quality of life. UConn's main campus in town provides a highly educational environment with lectures, exhibits, and cultural events throughout the year in addition to Division I College Athletics. In addition, the town enjoys a lot of protected open space for outdoor recreational activities, including Mansfield Hollow State Park, eight town parks and preserves, numerous Joshua's Trust properties, and university holdings. Mansfield as a community has experienced

"There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in."

~ Deepak Chopra

Photo courtesy of Art Kostapapas



¹ 2010 U.S. Census.

² CERC Town Profile 2009 (2008 Population data)

³ 2010 U.S. Census.

slow but stable residential growth. The town's commercial and industrial sectors are limited, and no town center exists to serve as a nexus for community activities. However, in partnership with the university, local businesses and its residents, the town has established a non-profit organization (the Mansfield Downtown Partnership, Inc.) that is currently constructing a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use town center next to UConn, E.O. Smith High School and the Town Hall. The first four buildings are open with a variety of restaurants, shops and services. Future phases are in varying stages of development and include plans for a grocery store, for-sale housing and additional mixed use buildings. Along with Mansfield's emerging downtown, families have access to the Mansfield Community Center (MCC) and the Mansfield Public Library. Both centers serve as sources for community connectedness through their rich and diverse programming.



Image provided courtesy of LeylandAlliance and Urban Design Associates

4. Our Blueprint



Barn, kayak, and husky photos courtesy of Art Kostapapas



"We could never have loved the earth so well if we had no childhood in it."

~ George Eliot

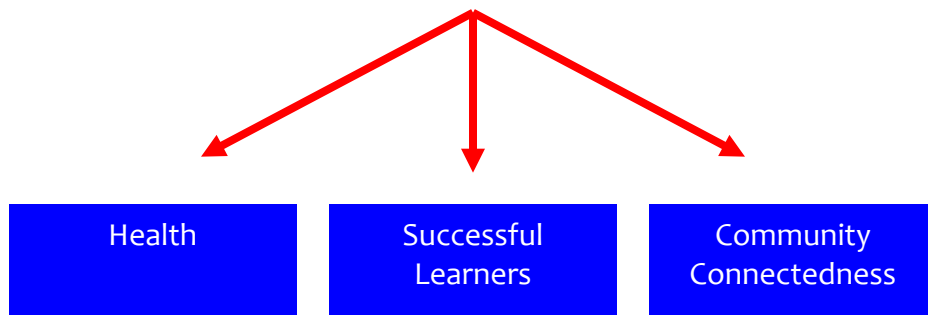
A. Population Result

Definition: Our population result is our end goal. It is what we want for our children ages birth through eight. It answers the questions: What are the most important hopes for our children, families, and community? What do we want for this population? How do we want our children to be? How do we want our families to be? In what type of community do we want to live? By discussing these questions, our community collectively developed our population result statement.

Mansfield Population Result:

“All Mansfield’s children from birth through eight years old are healthy, successful learners, and their families are connected to the community.”

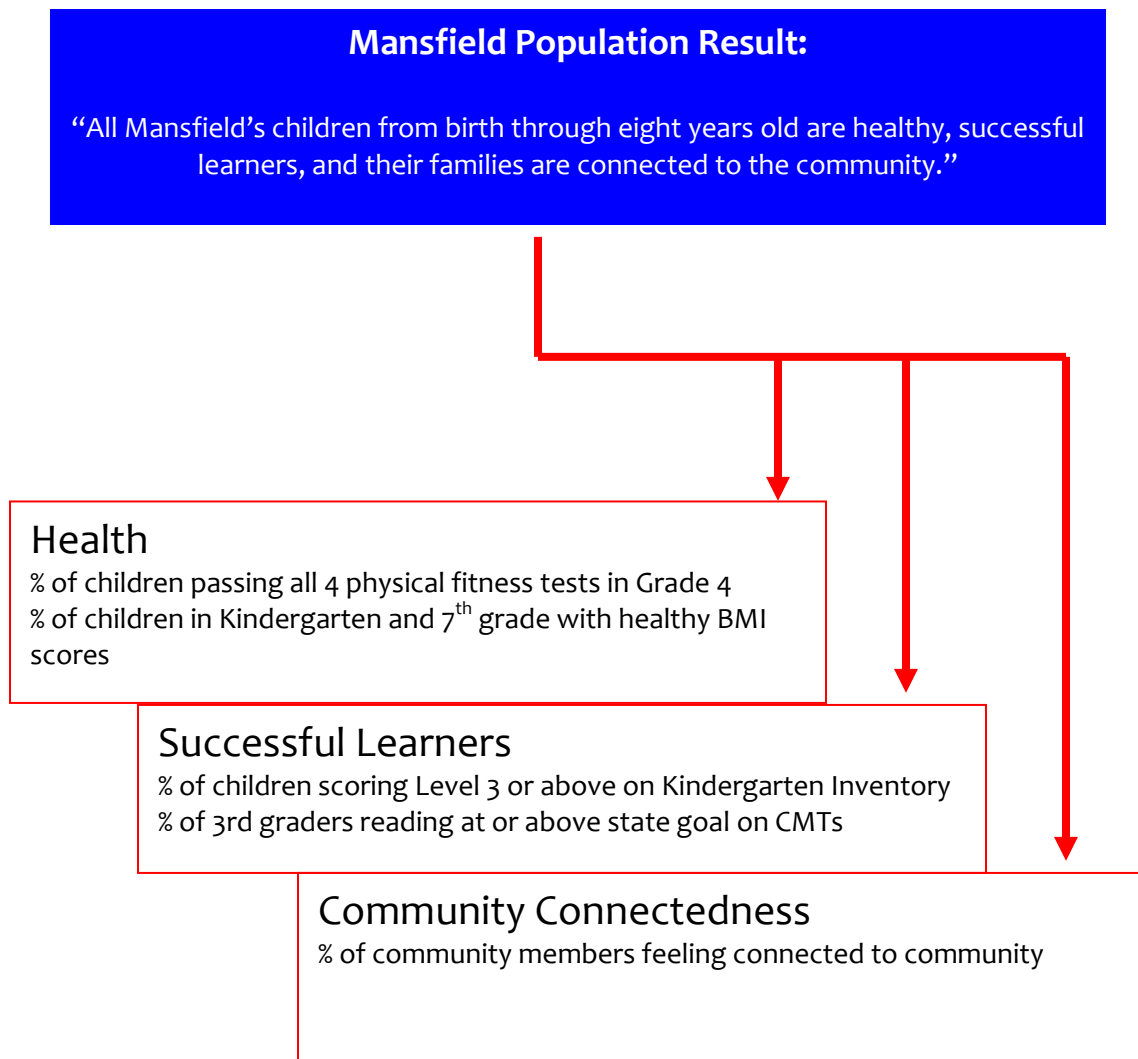
Strategic Areas: Strategic areas are distinct areas of focus within an RBA plan. In essence, they are large “buckets” to collect strategies that are all related to each other. Usually, there is a one-to-one correlation between the results statement and the strategic areas. Given our results statement, we chose three strategic areas to help organize our efforts. Each area is identified below, and is described in greater detail on the following pages.



B. Headline Indicators

Definition: Indicators are measures that tells us if we are getting our results or not. The best indicators are those that are extremely well-connected with the result (representative power), can be communicated to a broad audience (communication power), and for which there is quality data available on a timely basis (data power).

Our “small number” challenge: Because the population in Mansfield is so small, the availability of data poses a significant challenge and the meaningfulness of such small numbers makes interpretation difficult. With approximately 100 children in each cohort, a swing of only three children can cause a swing of 3%. The Blueprint Committee spent many long conversations developing Mansfield’s indicators based on the data that is available in this town and is most meaningful.



C. Health

About this strategic area: Children's good health is a requirement for their success, educationally and socially. It impacts a child's development, self-esteem, relationships, absenteeism, as well as a child's ability to pay attention, focus, and learn. Significant research articulates the ties between a child's physical and mental health and school attendance rates. Children with chronic health conditions such as asthma experience reduced school attendance and lower school performance, causing their parents to have inconsistent work attendance.⁴

We examined a range of health data as potential indicators – including data related to prenatal care, healthy births, and childhood asthma, but did not find substantial challenges in these areas. Thus, this section focuses on physical fitness and children at healthy weights.

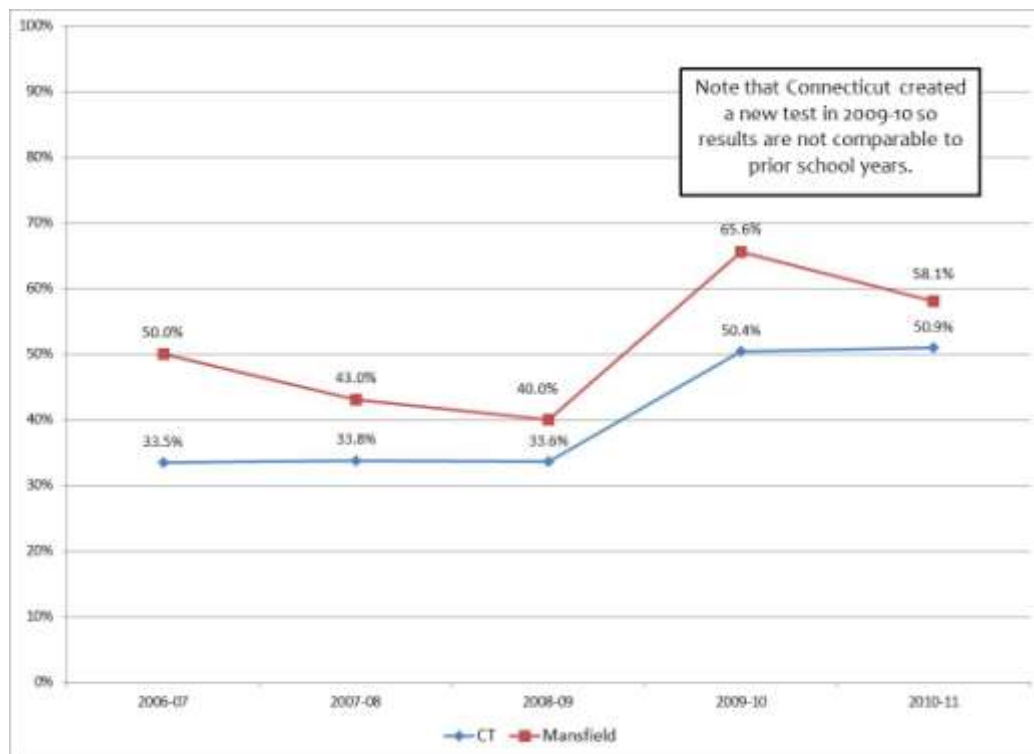
Headline indicators:

The *Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment* is administered to students in grades 4, 6, 8 and 10. The assessment includes four tests: (1) One Mile Run or Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run (multi-stage shuttle-run); (2) Back-saver Sit-and-Reach measure of joint flexibility; (3) 90° Push-up test of upper body muscle strength and endurance; and (4) Curl-up test of abdominal strength and endurance.

UPDATED DATA

**FIGURE 1: PERCENT OF MANSFIELD STUDENTS PASSING
ALL FOUR PHYSICAL FITNESS TESTS IN GRADE 4**

Source: CT State Department of Education CEDaR Data



⁴ Diette, MD, Gregory B. et al. "Nocturnal Asthma in Children Affects School Attendance, School Performance, and Parents' Work Attendance" in ARCH PEDIATR ADOLESC MED/VOL 154, SEP 2000.

As seen in the Figure 1, approximately 6 in 10 Mansfield 4th graders passed all four fitness tests in recent years, slightly better than the results for Connecticut as a whole. It is not clear if there is any trend in fitness test results, given the change in the assessment in 2009-10.

Body Mass Index (BMI) is used as a screening tool to identify possible weight problems for children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and American Academy of Pediatrics recommend the use of BMI to screen for overweight and obesity in children beginning at 2 years old.

NEW DATA

**FIGURE 2: PERCENT OF MANSFIELD STUDENTS CLASS OF 2013
IN KINDERGARTEN AND 7TH GRADE WITH BMI MEASUREMENTS WITHIN AND
OUTSIDE OF HEALTHY BMI STANDARD**

Source: Mansfield Public Schools / Eastern Highlands Health District 2012

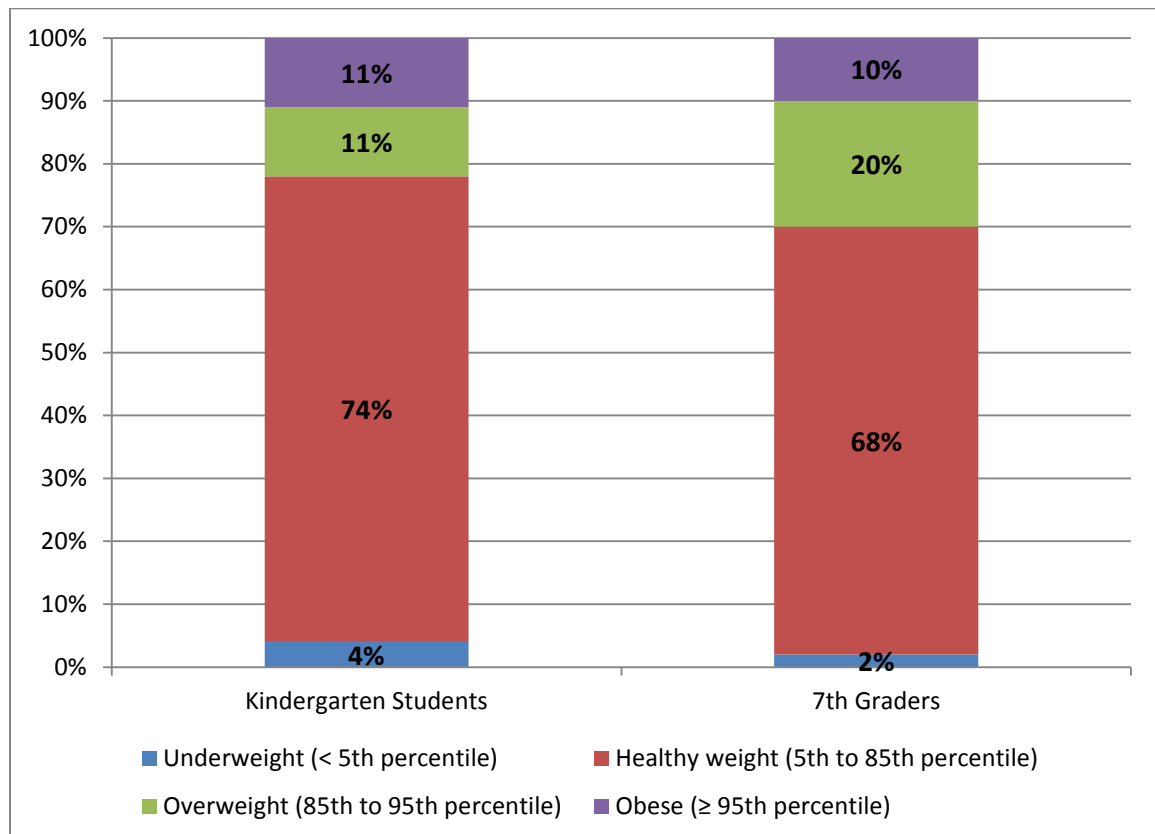


Figure 2 shows BMI data for students in 7th grade in 2012-13 at two points in time: (1) when they entered Kindergarten; and (2) when they entered 7th grade. While 22% were overweight or obese in Kindergarten, the percentage jumped to 30% by the time these students entered 7th grade.

STORY BEHIND THE DATA: We took a hard look at additional factors behind each of these data points to help us understand why these trends are occurring and to develop appropriate strategies to turn the curve. The Mansfield story behind these data points includes:

- The fitness and BMI numbers confirm a concern in the community about physical fitness and obesity trends. As one survey respondent said, “With childhood obesity becoming a significant problem nationally and its profound effects on health and development, it is worthwhile to explore and/or maintain activities that promote life-long interest in outdoors, team or individual sports, hobbies, etc. The health benefits are indisputable along with the opportunities for building strong social skills, an appreciation for our surroundings, and a decreased reliance on videos, iPods, and other socially isolating phenomena.”
- The table below shows BMI data by gender and student class cohort. The BMI scores for 2012 kindergarten students are not overly alarming, with 22% of students overweight or obese. There was not a substantial difference between kindergarten boys and girls at healthy weights (76% and 72% respectively). However, as noted above, for the cohort of students who were 7th graders in 2012-13, there was an increase from 22% overweight/obese in kindergarten to 30% overweight/obese in 6th grade. In other words, more students gradually became overweight as they aged from kindergarten to 6th grade. This suggests a need to promote the development of healthy eating and physical activity in the early years that, if continued, will lead to a decrease in the number of students in the overweight and/or obese range by 7th grade.

NEW DATA

Children's BMI by Age and Gender						
Source: Eastern Highlands Health District						
	At Kindergarten Health Screening			At 6 th Grade Health Screening		
7 th Graders in 2012	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
# children assessed	50	67	117	50	67	117
% underweight	4%	9%	7%	2%	1%	2%
% healthy weight	64%	76%	71%	66%	70%	68%
% overweight or obese	32%	15%	22%	32%	28%	30%
% obese	16%	6%	10%	12%	9%	10%
	At Kindergarten Health Screening					
Kindergarteners in 2012	Boys	Girls	Total			
# children assessed	58	69	127			
% underweight	5%	3%	4%			
% healthy weight	76%	72%	74%			
% overweight or obese	19%	25%	22%			
% obese	12%	10%	11%			

- Research shows that many children do not eat well or get enough physical activity. In 2009, nationally nearly 1 in 3 low income children are overweight or obese before their 5th birthday. In 2011, 15-20% of Connecticut children aged 2-4 years of age were obese.
- Child care programs have many opportunities to improve children's healthy eating and physical activity behaviors each day. Sixty percent of infants and children up to age 5 spend an average of 29 hours per week in a child care setting. More than half of children ages 5 to 14 also spend time in a child care setting.
- A recent study showed that children consume 27 percent of their calories from snack foods consisting mostly of salty snacks, candy, desserts and sweetened beverages. Children between ages 2 to 6 consume the most snacks per day and have increased their

overall daily caloric intake by 182 calories. On average, children have above 170 discretionary calories per day.

- The American Heart Association recommends that children ages 4 to 8, limit their added sugar intake to 5 ¼ teaspoons per day, but average daily consumption is four times as much (21 teaspoons).
- Serving only healthy foods and beverages in child care settings models healthy eating behaviors and helps children avoid excess calories. It helps parents balance children's food choices at home and gives children a better chance of meeting their daily MyPyramid recommendations. It also allows parents to determine whether and when their children have less nutritious foods.
- When parents send in homemade food, it is difficult to ensure that the food has been handled properly and is safe from bacterial contamination. Homemade foods are also a concern for children with food allergies because it is difficult to determine what ingredients have been used and whether the food has been contaminated with potential allergens.

Strategies to turn the curve: After sifting through the data and the stories behind the curve, we developed one major strategy, with sub-strategies to undertake in order to turn the curve.

Strategy #1: Promote wellness & prevent illness in children 0-8 and their families

Sub-strategies:

- ▶ Implement **Fit by 4th Grade**, a community-wide initiative to promote physical activity for children 8 months through grade 4 which develop the skills and strength necessary for children to pass all four Physical Fitness Tests.
 - Opportunities for children to test their abilities four times a year on each of the four fitness test areas (i.e., mile walk / run, sit and stretch, right-angle push-ups, curl-ups).
 - Engage a wide range of community partners to promote physical fitness and provide opportunities. For example, expand programs for young families through Parks & Recreation (e.g., Saturday morning hike), promote organized sports programs, encourage sports programs to waive fees for financially challenged families, and make better use of community facilities to promote physical activity after school and on the weekends.
 - Engage 5th graders to coach younger students.
 - Have younger children challenge their parents and other adults in the fitness areas.
 - Report on progress in implementing Fit by 4th Grade (e.g., % of children in each cohort participating in activities) and results (% 4th graders passing all four Fitness Tests).
- ▶ Integrate physical fitness activities and supports throughout the Plan:
 - Add sidewalks & bike paths that are oriented toward community and recreational facilities (see Community Connectedness section).
 - Promote physical fitness through a Community Playground (see Community Connectedness section).



- Promote wellness and physical fitness as part of the One Book project (see Successful Learners section).
- Widely publicize information about nutrition, exercise and healthy lifestyles (including Fit by 4th Grade) to families and the community (see Community Connectedness).

Implementation Progress: MAC's Health Team leads implementation. Key activities since 2009 include:

- ▶ Sharing information with key partners on nutrition in the public schools. The Health Team sponsored several talks with area physicians and school food service administrators introducing them to the Nu-Val system that was created by Dr. David Katz from Yale.
- ▶ Promoting healthy behaviors. The Team distributed **9 5 2 1 0** information (see sidebar) and has partnered with the Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD) on initiatives that support healthy behaviors.
- ▶ Supporting MAC's transportation proposal. The Team is using data from a walkability audit conducted by Mark Fenton and data on physical fitness testing for MAC's transportation proposal to support town infrastructure spending on sidewalks and bike paths that link schools, the library and our new Town center. (See Community Connectedness section for details.)
- ▶ Using data to inform decision-making. The Team continued to investigate indicators that can help us to better understand community health needs. For example, the Team decided not to focus on prenatal care after data revealed a relatively small population in need.

95210 is a community wide strategy for promoting life-long healthy habits. It communicates key daily behaviors that promote healthy weight and overall good health:

- 9 hours of sleep
- 5 fruits and vegetables
- 2 hour limit of leisure screen time
- 1 hour of activity
- 0 sugary drinks

D. Successful Learners

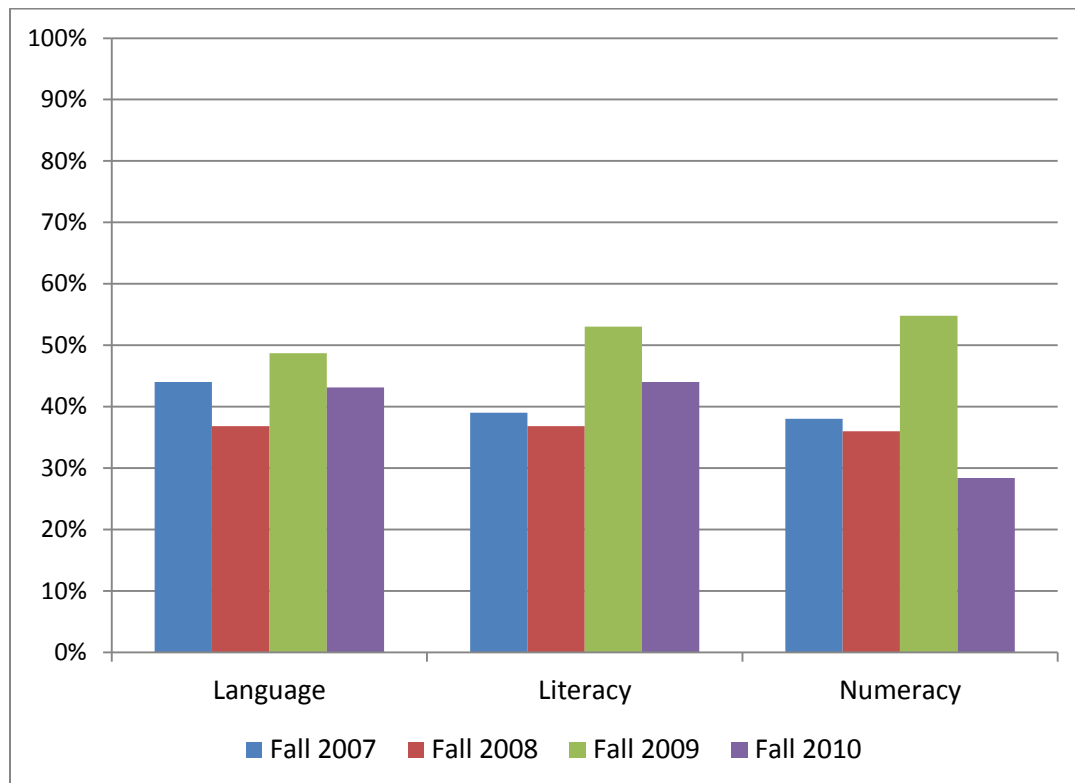
About this strategic area: In order for children to be successful in life, we need them to be successful learners – both inside and outside of school. Learning begins at an early age, first in a child's home and then ultimately in public or home-based school. There are many options available to Mansfield families with children birth through eight years old starting with home based child care providers. Currently there are six licensed providers in town. Mansfield also has four National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited Early Care and Education (ECE) centers and two Montessori schools. The three public schools each offer an a.m. and p.m. pre-k program as well. Many families are able to take advantage of programming in the town offered by the Mansfield Community Center, the Library, The Community Center for the Arts and other area programming. This means that many children enter kindergarten having some sort of pre-k experience. Since 1999 Mansfield has also been a School Readiness grant recipient. This has allowed 15 families each year to attend a quality ECE center.

Headline indicators: Two indicators were chosen as the best representations of successful learners in the community: student performance on the Kindergarten Entrance Inventory and the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

UPDATED DATA

FIGURE 3: AVERAGE PERCENT OF MANSFIELD CHILDREN SCORING LEVEL 3 (CONSISTENT SKILLS) ON KINDERGARTEN INVENTORY

Source: CT State Department of Education



Connecticut Kindergarten Entrance Inventory is based on six skill domains that reflect a set of skills expected of children entering kindergarten. These domains are: language, literacy, numeracy, physical/motor, creative/aesthetic, and personal/social skills. Students are graded

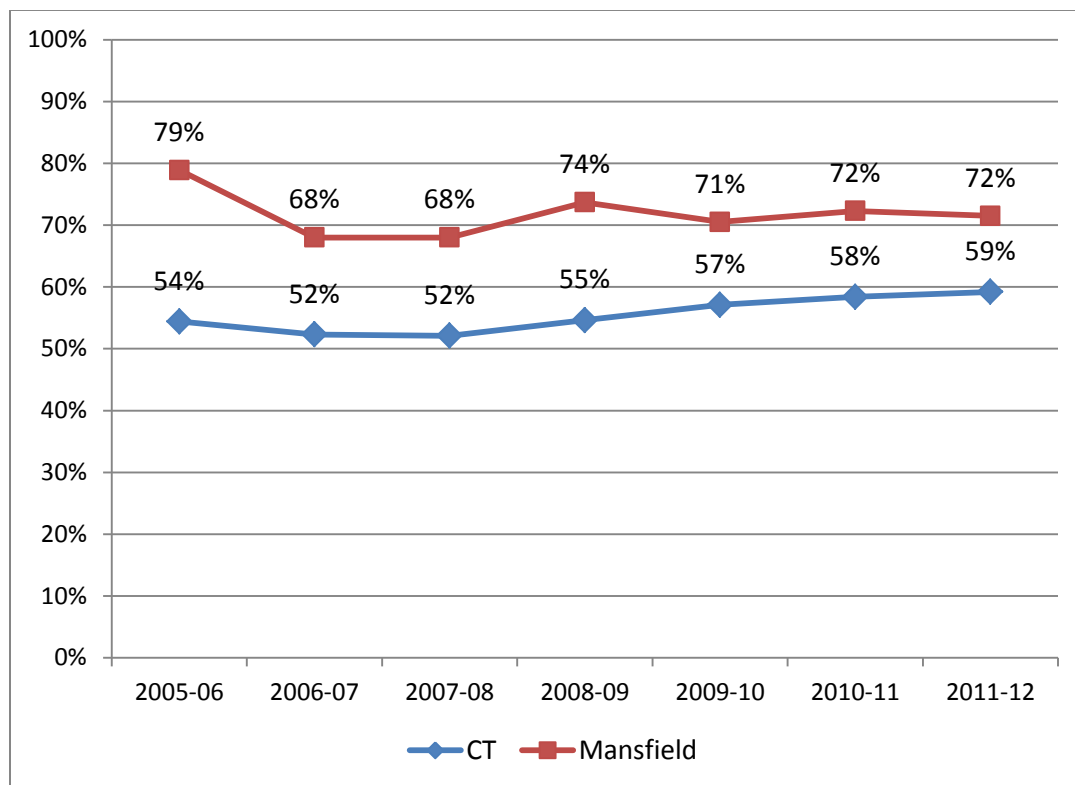
on three performance levels. Students at Level 1 demonstrate emerging skills in the specified area and require a large degree of instructional support. Students at Level 2 inconsistently demonstrate the skills in the specified area and require some instructional support. Students at Level 3 consistently demonstrate the skills in the area and require minimal instructional support. The use of the Inventory was piloted in 2006 across all towns in the State of Connecticut.

Figure 3 shows trends in the percent of Kindergarteners consistently demonstrating skills on the three literacy / numeracy domains (see below for data on all six domains). Looking across all years, approximately 40% of students consistently demonstrate language and literacy skills, with slightly lower levels on numeracy skills.

The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) is a test administered to students in grades 3 through 8 in mathematics, reading, writing, and science (science was administered for the first time in March 2008 for fifth and eighth grade). The CMT is graded on a scale from 1 to 5 in each area tested. On this scale, 5 is considered "advanced," 4 is considered "goal," 3 is considered "proficient," 2 is considered "basic," and 1 is considered "below basic."

FIGURE 4: PERCENT OF MANSFIELD CHILDREN SCORING AT OR ABOVE GOAL ON THIRD GRADE READING CMT

Source: State Department of Education



Approximately 70% of Mansfield third graders are meeting state goals in reading, at least 10 percentage points better than the state average. While the overall reading achievement is high, this masks differences in achievement for sub-populations of students (see below for details).

STORY BEHIND THE DATA: We examined factors behind each indicator to help us understand the reasons for these results and to develop the most appropriate strategies to improve results for all children.

As seen in the **Kindergarten Inventory** table below, the highest readiness is found within creative / aesthetic skills and personal / social skills. The lowest readiness areas are language and numeracy skills. In general, Mansfield students perform slightly better than the State overall. The numbers point to a possible focus on kindergarten transition and overall training on the pre-kindergarten benchmarks. Although results on the Kindergarten Inventory decreased in 2010, it is a short trend with only two years of data and could be attributable to changes in only a few students, given the small numbers in Mansfield.

UPDATED DATA

Kindergarten Entrance Inventory Scores: Percent Scoring at Level 3 (consistent skills)				
Source: Mansfield Public Schools / CT SDE				
Mansfield	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010
Language skills	44%	37%	49%	43%
Literacy skills	39%	37%	53%	44%
Numeracy skills	38%	36%	55%	28%
Physical/Motor skills	47%	38%	50%	28%
Creative/Aesthetic skills	42%	39%	58%	34%
Personal/Social skills	40%	42%	47%	27%
STATE SCORES	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010
Language skills	35%	37%	37%	39%
Literacy skills	29%	34%	35%	39%
Numeracy skills	32%	36%	37%	42%
Physical/Motor skills	43%	47%	47%	51%
Creative/Aesthetic skills	44%	48%	47%	52%
Personal/Social skills	38%	41%	41%	44%

The percent of students with at least some **pre-kindergarten experience** has been fairly steady in Mansfield, at approximately 8 in 10 students (see table below for details). However, it is important to note that no systematic way exists in Mansfield to gauge unmet need for pre-school experiences; no information exists about why 20% do not participate in preschool experiences. This may be an area for future investigation. Further, no information exists yet about the quality or depth of these pre-school experiences. NAEYC is the current quality standard set by Connecticut in relation to school readiness.

UPDATED DATA

% of Mansfield children entering Kindergarten with preschool experience					
Source: CT State Department of Education					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Percent	79.7%	81.1%	90.5%	81.7%	81.2%

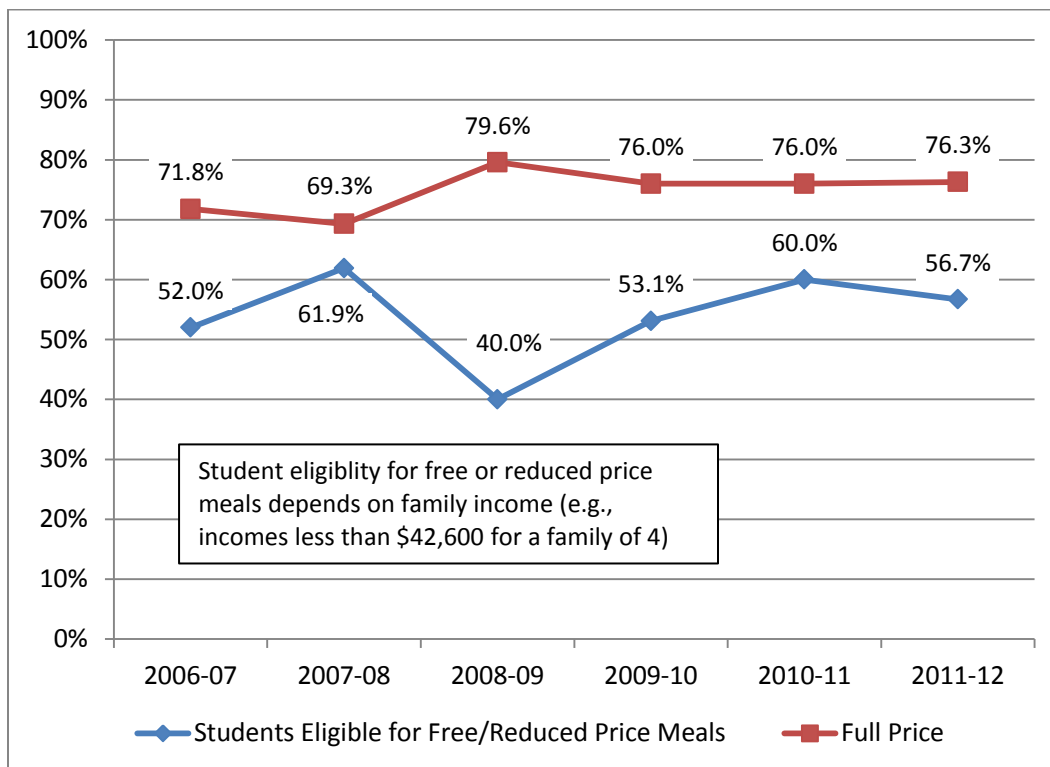
While Mansfield's **reading scores** on the CMTs have exceeded state averages and been fairly steady in recent years, nearly 3 in 10 third graders are not meeting state goals. And as in the state as a whole, there is a persistent achievement gap between children receiving free & reduced price meals and more affluent students – ranging from 7.4% to 39.6% depending on the year (see next page for table and Figure 5). This suggests a need in the community for greater focus on early literacy and reading, particularly for those students who are not meeting state goals.

UPDATED DATA

3 rd Grade Reading CMT Scores – Percent At or Above Goal by Income (students eligible for free/reduced price meals) Source: cmtreports.com						
Income	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
F/R Meals	52.0%	61.9%	40.0%	53.1%	60.0%	56.7%
Full Price	71.8%	69.3%	79.6%	76.0%	76.0%	76.3%
Achievement gap	19.8%	7.4%	39.6%	22.9%	16.0%	19.6%

FIGURE 5: PERCENT OF MANSFIELD CHILDREN SCORING AT OR ABOVE GOAL ON THIRD GRADE READING CMT BY INCOME

Source: cmtreports.com



Very little information exists on **infant & toddler needs** and parent satisfaction of the available care. However, we are aware that waiting lists exist at some area centers, which may indicate a need for more slots than are currently available. Efforts in connection with UConn are needed to identify and quantify the needs, and develop ways to meet the need that may exist.

Strategies to turn the curve: We developed three strategies to help children prepare for and succeed in Kindergarten, and improve literacy skills among all children.

Strategy #2: Develop an effective Kindergarten Transition Plan

Sub-strategies:

- ▶ Convene a series of meetings of the Collaborative Area Network (CAN) to develop and implement an effective Kindergarten Transition Plan.
- ▶ Key elements of the Plan will include:
 - Use of common intake forms across preschools in Mansfield
 - Alignment of curriculum between preschools and kindergarten
 - Use of common assessments across preschools (e.g., Ages and Stages, benchmarks, portfolios, developmental narratives) and the use of the Kindergarten Inventory in spring for preschool children who will be enrolling in kindergarten in the fall
 - Review and enhancement of existing kindergarten transition activities / opportunities for children and parents

Strategy #3: Raise and improve literacy skills in the community

Sub-strategies:

- ▶ Promote literacy through Week of the Young Child (WOYC) events and projects. For example, Mansfield implemented the One Book project in 2013 (see below for progress).
- ▶ Meet with relevant school and library personnel to investigate strategies for increased accessibility of Books on the Bus. Publicize Books on the Bus in conjunction with the Plan's communication strategy (see Community Connectedness section for details).
- ▶ Design and implement a targeted literacy project:
 - Offer the Raising Readers Parent Clubs for targeted families, where parents participate in an 8-session program where they explore and learn ways to promote literacy and receive high-quality children's books. Determine how families will be identified for the program.
 - Extend the Breakfast and Books program within the schools to include younger siblings. Investigate other reading activities that involve parents and children.
 - Infuse literacy activities in summer programs for children (e.g., Mansfield Recreation summer camp, summer school). For example, the Mansfield Library can provide a collection of books at camp throughout the summer.
 - Investigate opportunities for increased literacy experiences over the summer including the development of coordinated literacy activities that involve the public schools, library, home-based providers and early learning centers. Meet with relevant library personnel to discuss ways to support increased community access to Library services, including the possible expansion of library hours.
 - Inform parents of the importance and availability of literacy activities during the summer in conjunction with the Plan's communication strategy (see Community Connectedness section).
 - Investigate strategies and feasibility related to ongoing implementation of the One Book project regularly and systematically.

Strategy #4: Improve the quality of early care and education

Sub-strategies:

- ▶ Strengthen CAN to support early childhood educators, including developing an Infant-Toddler Community of Practice.
- ▶ Continue to develop the network of home-based providers (see below for details).
- ▶ Continue to deliver professional development and technical assistance to ECE centers and home-based providers.

Implementation Progress: MAC's Successful Learners Team leads implementation. Key activities since 2009 include:

- ▶ Distributing, tabulating and analyzing data from a new MAC Kindergarten Intake form. The form was distributed to the families of all incoming kindergarteners to gather more detailed information about the extent and type of preschool experience children were having before entering Kindergarten, and to determine obstacles families encounter when looking for early care. Of the 69 responses received, 24 respondents felt that finding information about early care and education choices was "reasonable - could use improvement." 13 respondents were not able to have the "early care and education of my choice." We will have to redesign our form in order to extract more specific information, but this beginning effort will help us with future revisions.
- ▶ Implementing the One Book project. MAC affirmed a proposal to work on a One Book project in 2012-13, to encourage both literacy and healthy lifestyles (see Strategy #1) for children from birth to age 5 and their families. The book, "Hop, Hop, Jump" was chosen with a series of events during the Week of the Young Child. The culminating event took place in the Library and featured Jeff Smithson, a professional entertainer, along with a dance group, craft activities, and a healthy snack. Coordination took place amongst the four Early Childhood Centers, two Montessori schools and home care providers to read the book during the week and offer activities for families.
- ▶ Developing a network of home-based providers and training opportunities. In 2013 MAC invited all area home care providers to network with the other area ECE providers creating a community of practice in the town. On May 18, MAC in collaboration with four area towns, hosted a day-long training that included a "Play to Learn, Learn to Play" session, lunch, peer-to-peer time and CPR training. Next steps include: (1) convening homecare providers and surveying providers to identify ways to help them better stay connected to the work of MAC and center-based care providers; and (2) including homecare providers in the Kindergarten Transition Plan.

Areas for Future Development

- ▶ Investigate and research summer reading loss for children in preschool through grade 1. How significant is the problem for younger students (i.e., current learning loss for students in grades K-3)? What strategies have been demonstrated to address summer reading loss for these students?
- ▶ Investigate literacy programs and activities offered at area hospitals and birthing centers. Explore ways to expand these efforts and/or bring in existing literacy programs (e.g., Reach Out and Read).
- ▶ Investigate need for additional affordable, quality infant and toddler slots. This may lead to higher rates of children participating in quality preschool programs.
- ▶ Develop a plan for offering the spring Kindergarten Inventory in the Town of Mansfield, to assess progress in children's development.

E. Community Connectedness

About this strategic area: Throughout this entire process, anecdotal information kept rising up in conversation about the quality of life for families with young children in Mansfield, and how it is different from other towns in Connecticut. The rural nature of the town, the lack of a designated town center, lack of sidewalks and easy transportation, a partially disconnected population of graduate students with young children caused the group to look hard at the concept of community connectedness and the role of having a connected community in the lives of Mansfield's young children.

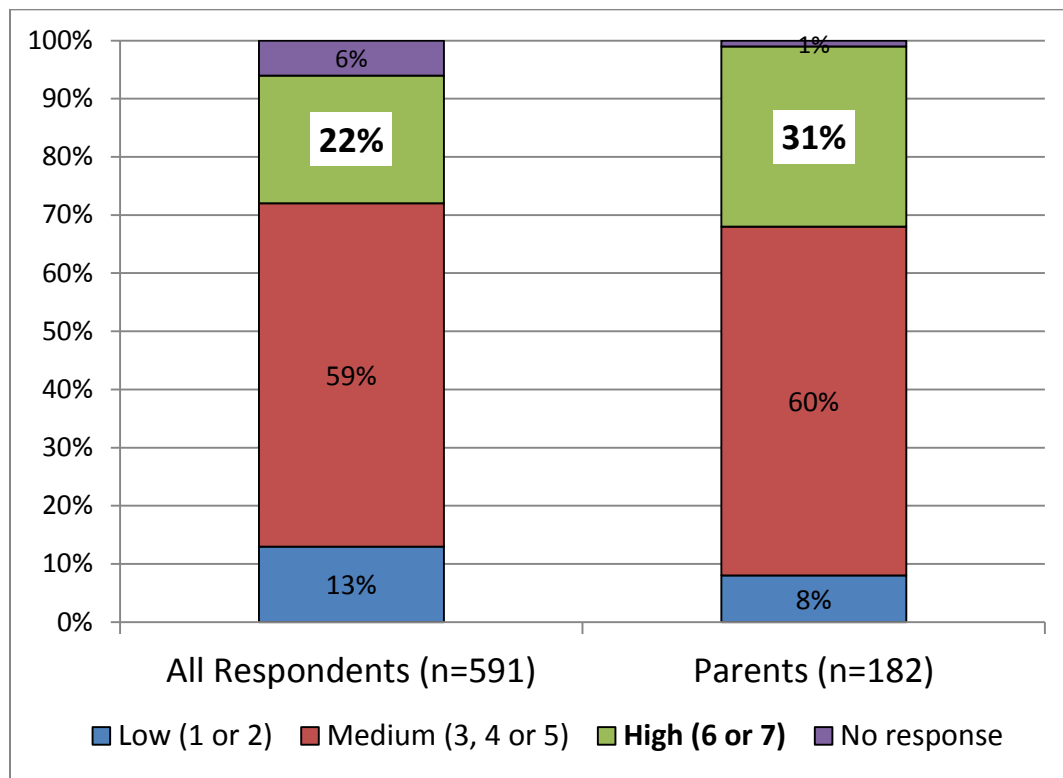
Headline indicators: In 2009, after extensive conversations and searching for appropriate existing measures, Mansfield concluded that no measurement of community connectedness was currently being collected. In fact, the first strategy for this focus area was to develop a way to measure a baseline for community connectedness.

As a result of the 2009 Plan, the **Mansfield Community Connectedness Survey** was developed and administered in October 2010 to identify the extent to which Mansfield residents feel connected with their community. Data collected from this survey provide a baseline measure for Community Connectedness in Mansfield.

NEW DATA

FIGURE 6: CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY
PERCENT REPORTING HIGH, MEDIUM AND LOW CONNECTIONS

Source: MAC Community Connectedness Survey



The Community Connectedness Team and the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis (CCEA) administered and analyzed survey data from 591 respondents, including 182 respondents with children (a 30% response rate).

As shown in Figure 6, 22% of all respondents reported high levels of connection to the community, rating their connection a 6 or 7 on a scale of 1 to 7. 59% reported moderate levels of connection to the community (3, 4 or 5) and 13% reported low levels of connection (1 or 2). For respondents with children, 31% reported high levels of connection to the community. In contrast to the relatively low ratings for community connections, 64% of all respondents and 73% of parents rated Mansfield as a good place to live (6 or 7).

Secondary indicators: Mansfield will track the following Community Connectedness Survey questions as secondary indicators:

- Percent of parents very satisfied with public transportation. The average rating on the 2010 survey was 4.8.
- Percent of parents very satisfied with places to meet people. The average rating was 4.2.
- Percent of parents very satisfied with playgrounds. 48% of parents were very satisfied (6 or 7) with an average rating of 5.5.

Story behind community connectedness: The 2009 version of our Plan identified several issues that influenced the sense of community:

- Large student population. The median age for the Town of Mansfield is 23 years, compared with the State median age of 40 years. For graduate students, it can be challenging to connect with the rest of the town's events.
- Transient / rural nature of the town. Some of Mansfield's families experience a sense of isolation, in part because of the more transient student population combined with the rural surrounding geography. According to the 2000 Census, one-quarter of the population (26.1%) had moved to Mansfield in the past year and 52.1% had moved to Mansfield in the past five years. These numbers are high compared with the entire State, in which 17% had moved to the State in the past year and 44.2% had moved to the State in the past five years.

Some parents report having a tough time getting connected with other parents of young children. One parent said, "The low social density of housing in Mansfield discourages interaction among parents." Another said, "New moms can feel very isolated in Mansfield... There could be a place (physical place or online) where get-togethers can be posted without the moms going through "official" organizations/clubs."

- Transportation challenges. Because of the rural nature of Mansfield, transportation is an issue for residents. Data from the Willimantic-Storrs bus shows steadily increasing ridership with 63,586 rides in FY2008. Bus service routes do not always connect with key "connection" places in town.

The town's limited sidewalk infrastructure and limited public transportation contributes to the feeling of isolation. As one community member said, "The roads are dangerous to walk on. We don't have sidewalks through most of town. Children cannot safely go to neighbors houses without being driven for the most part, or ride their bikes safely to important places in town like the community center and the library. Families would be healthier and happier with more ways to simply get around town together, slower, in community, in harmony with the beauty of this town." Another said, "I would really, really, really appreciate it if there were a bus stop at the library. My kids and I don't feel safe walking up 89, but we would really like to utilize the public transportation system." Mansfield applied for a Safe Routes to School grant in 2011 but did not receive funding.

- Mansfield has a Family Resource Guide which is distributed to new residents and families new to parenting. The online version of this guide is also available to all residents on the Town website. This document is paid for entirely by local businesses purchasing advertisements in the guide. Mansfield Advocates for Children also distributes a publication called Family Fun in Mansfield three times/year which lists local low cost activities for families throughout our Town over a three month period.

UPDATED DATA

The **Mansfield Community Connectedness Survey** provided a wealth of information to help understand the story behind the numbers (see CCEA's August 2012 report for detailed survey findings). CCEA researchers analyzed survey data by different sub-groups (parenting status, education level, income level) and analyzed the difference between respondents' level of satisfaction with a specific item (e.g., "places to meet people") and from their feeling about how important that item is. CCEA found four items that nearly all sub-groups felt were important to address (i.e., a large difference between its importance and their satisfaction):

1. Public transportation
2. Places to meet people
3. Having reliable neighbors
4. Playgrounds

As noted in the CCEA report: "Of these four items, 'having reliable neighbors' may overlap significantly with 'places to meet people' and may suggest some difficulty in neighbors getting to know neighbors with something more than a 'nodding acquaintance.' Thus facilitating more interaction within the Mansfield community may address this issue. Clearly, the other two items—public transportation and playgrounds are clearly important to a large number of the respondents and warrant attention."⁵

The CCEA report included recommendations for enhancing community connectedness, such as: (a) greater more diverse usage of public school resources; (b) starting neighborhood associations; (c) expansion of existing Town resources, including the town center; and (d) implementing targeted public relations campaigns.

In Fall 2012, students from the University of Connecticut completed **An Analysis of Public Transportation in Mansfield** which included a survey of low-income families living in Holinko Estates. The study found:

1. A large proportion of households at Holinko Estates access public transportation regularly, having limited access to cars.
2. Public transportation options are limited. Only the UConn bus picks up directly from Holinko Estates, and Windham Regional Transit District (WRTD) only has one bus stop that overlaps with UConn bus routes. Families report several challenges with public transportation: it is not convenient to home, bus schedules do not meet their needs, and the bus does not go to useful locations.
3. Despite high demand, the current transit system does not provide access to the Mansfield Community Library. The bus stops .2 mile from the library. With no sidewalk access, this would force families with small children to walk along a busy and dangerous road.

⁵ Carstensen, F.V., Waite, B., Coghlan, J. & Young, J. *Phase I Executive Report: MAC Data Collection and Evaluation Project*. CCEA, August 2012, page 10.

Strategies to turn the curve: We focused on key challenges identified in the Connectedness survey and transportation study: communications with families, public transportation, and community playgrounds.

Strategy #5: Improve communications with Mansfield families with young children to raise awareness about community resources for families with young children

Sub-strategies:

- ▶ Develop and implement a Communication Plan that incorporates a range of strategies, including social media. The plan needs to deliver a consistent message both about the work of MAC and work of Mansfield's plan for young children. The Communication Plan should reflect the recommendations of the CCEA Community Connectedness Survey report and enlist CCEA's assistance in developing the plan.
- ▶ Specific elements and activities may include:
 - Update the Family Resource Guide and explore additional methods for disseminating the Guide through the Town of Mansfield's website and through social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).
 - Develop the Town of Mansfield's website as a virtual resource center.
 - Coordinate communication efforts with UConn.
 - Explore community-building opportunities (e.g., benches in key community-building sites, picnic tables, social connection activities).

Strategy #6: Improve transportation options to make key community locations accessible

Sub-strategies:

- ▶ Develop a proposal for the Windham Regional Transit District (WRTD) to pilot a bus route to local apartments based on the recommendations of the Holinko Estates study. In the proposal, specify data that will be collected, and how data will be used to develop the transportation infrastructure for young families in a way that supports community connectedness.
- ▶ In partnership with the Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD), explore applying for the next round of Safe Routes to School funding, including building a sidewalk to the Library.
- ▶ Refine the current Ride Share (carpooling) program to address the needs of families with young children.

Strategy #7: Create a community built playground in the heart of Mansfield

Sub-strategies:

- ▶ Continue to raise funds for the community playground, building on efforts to date (see below).
- ▶ Deliver a consistent message to the community that the playground will be a place for families to meet and gather. The goal is to bring people together and promote investment in the community. Our tag line is: "We're not building a playground... we're building our community."

Implementation Progress: MAC's Community Connectedness Team leads implementation. Key activities since 2009 include:

- ▶ Forming a Transportation Workgroup. The workgroup developed the transportation strategy, commissioned the Holinko Estates report, and shared the report with the Town's Transportation Advisory Committee.

- ▶ Forming a Playground Workgroup to create a community built playground in the heart of our town. The Playground Workgroup, working with Leathers & Associates and the Town, is using the community built method of playground construction to help bring members of our community together to plan, fundraise, design, and build a playground. Fundraising events held in February 2012 included families and children making tiles and jewelry at the Mansfield Community Center, and a concert by UConn a cappella group "Take Note."
- ▶ Creating a presentation on survey findings. The Committee will make presentations to the Town Council, Board of Education, and PTOs among other groups to share Community Connectedness Survey findings and create stronger partnerships with these groups.

5. Implementation Considerations



“Childhood is a short season.”
~ Helen Hayes



Oriole bird and dam photos courtesy of Art Kostapapas

A. Key Partners

The success of this plan relies on our community and our partners pulling together to work collaboratively to achieve these results. The following table shows the roles of our partners in implementing each Plan strategy.

Strategy	Agency / Partner	Role	Specific Activities
#1 Promote wellness & prevent illness in children 0-8 and their families			
➤ Implement <i>Fit by 4th Grade</i>	Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD)	Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage partners to develop and implement Fit by 4th Grade Report on progress and results
	Mansfield Community Center	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for students to test their abilities in each test Promote sports and physical fitness activities
	Mansfield Parks and Rec	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand programs for young families (e.g., hikes)
	Mansfield Public Schools	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for students to test their abilities in each test Engage 5th graders to coach younger students
	Early Care Providers	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for students to test their abilities in each test
	Montessori Schools	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have younger children challenge their parents and other adults
	Home Care providers	Partner	
	Town organized sports organizations	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waive fees for financially challenged families
	University of CT / ECSU	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign interns to provide training for home-care providers (e.g., sports medicine students)
	Faith Community	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for students to test their abilities in each test Sponsor children for organized sports
	Area pediatric care providers	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support implementation of Fit by 4th Grade
#2 Develop an effective Kindergarten Transition Plan			
	Collaborative Area Network (CAN)	Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene a series of meetings to develop and implement the transition plan
	Mansfield Public Schools	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in development of plan
	Early Care Providers	Partner	
	Home Care providers	Partner	
	Mansfield Public Library	Partner	

Strategy	Agency / Partner	Role	Specific Activities
#3 Raise and improve literacy skills in the community			
➤ Promote literacy through Week of the Young Child (WOYC) events and projects	WOYC Committee	Lead	• Design and lead implementation of each year's events
	Mansfield Public Schools	Partner	• Support implementation, deliver activities and events at their locations
	Early Care Providers	Partner	
	Home Care providers	Partner	
	Mansfield Public Library	Partner	
	University of CT	Partner	• Recruit student volunteers to assist in events
	Other partners identified based on theme for each year	Partner	
➤ Expand Books on the Bus	Mansfield Public Schools	Lead	• Incorporate family literacy programming
			• Explore other times for visits to increase participation
	Mansfield Public Library	Partner	• Explore providing library cards to children and families
	Community Connections Team	Partner	• Publicize in conjunction with Plan's communication strategy
	Mansfield Parks & Rec	Partner	• Investigate adding a stop at their summer camp
➤ Design and implement a targeted literacy project	Mansfield Public Schools	Lead	• Seek funding for project (2012 granted not received)
			• Implement summer reading and school-year components
	Early Care Providers	Partner	• Facilitate Raising Readers for participating families
	Faith Community	Partner	• Help recruit families to participate in Raising Readers
#4 Improve the quality of early care and education			
	Collaborative Area Network (CAN)	Lead	• Support professional development of early childhood educators
	Early Care Providers	Partner	• Participate in professional development opportunities
	Home Care providers	Partner	
#5 Improve communications with Mansfield families with young children to raise awareness about community resources for families with young children			
	Community Connectedness Team	Lead	• Seek a partner to lead the communication efforts
			• Develop and implement a communication plan
	CT Center for Economic Analysis	Partner	• Help develop plan building on Community Connectedness Survey findings
	Public Relations Consultant (e.g. ECA)	Consult-ant	• Provide resources and support for development of plan (e.g. ECA toolkit)
			• Help develop and write plan (if resources available)
	All MAC partners	Partner	• Help implement communications plan using their existing dissemination vehicles
	University of CT	Partner	• Assign interns to develop products (e.g., students from Communications, Graphics and Marketing, Digital Media)

Strategy	Agency / Partner	Role	Specific Activities
#6 Improve transportation options to make key community locations accessible			
	Community Connectedness Team (temporary)	Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek a partner to lead the effort Engage partners to implement strategy
	Mansfield Planning & Zoning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore applying for next round of Safe Routes to School funding
	Mansfield Tomorrow	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options for collaborating on transportation actions (sidewalks, taxi service, bus service, etc.)
	Housing Authority	Partner	
	Transportation Advisory Committee	Partner	
	Mansfield Downtown Partnership	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss / pilot new bus routes to address transportation challenges Explore additional student research projects Refine Ride Share program Expand Fare Free program
	Windham Region Transit District	Partner	
	University of Connecticut	Partner	
	Community Connectedness Team	Partner	
#7 Create a community built playground in the heart of Mansfield			
	Playground Workgroup	Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead fundraising and communications efforts
	Mansfield Parks & Rec	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-kind support
	Mansfield Downtown Partnership	Partner	
	Other partners identified as fundraising plan is implemented	Partner	

B. Resource Plan

Introduction: In recognition of the challenging economic times and the strain on everyone's budgets, the plan focuses on strategies that are no-cost and low-cost for the first two years. Our overall financing situation is fairly straightforward.

The two primary MAC funders are the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund and the Town of Mansfield. These funds are devoted primarily to supporting the Collaborative, covering the costs for staffing, consultants, and support for meetings (e.g., supplies, food). While a large number of community partners contribute in-kind support, there are no other major funders (foundation, corporations) in Mansfield who can contribute substantial cash grants or support. Thus, MAC's goal is to increase funding from the Town and seek support from the Board of Education to sustain funding for MAC over the long term.

Resource Plan: MAC Teams and work groups are taking the lead to acquire resources to implement specific strategies, working in collaboration with key partners for each strategy. Teams have identified the following sources and fundraising approaches:

- **Physical Fitness.** Eastern Highlands Health District will lead efforts to implement Fit by 4th Grade, and devote in-kind resources to implement the strategy.
- **Literacy.** Mansfield Public Schools will lead efforts to raise funds and implement a targeted literacy program for Kindergarten students (a recent grant application to Liberty Bank was not funded).
- **Transportation.** The Transportation work group may re-apply for the Safe Routes to School grant to build a sidewalk that connects key community locations. The work group also seeks to maximize existing resources, which include publicizing the Town's Fare Free program that allows residents and students to ride the bus for free. Finally, the work group will investigate potential new funders engaged in the development of Storrs Center and UConn Technology Park (e.g., EdR, Erland).
- **Playground.** The Playground work group is raising funds for the new playground through a combination of fundraising events, grants, and individual donations (see below for details).

The tables starting on the next page shows our initial resource plan for the MAC collaborative and for each plan strategy. We will develop a more detailed resource plan utilizing tools from a recent Sustainability Planning workshop sponsored by the Graustein Memorial Fund.

FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND SUPPORT

Mansfield Advocates for Children (MAC) Collaborative

Source	2012-13 Support			Budget for Future Years			Additional Detail
	Cash	Redeployed Staff	In-Kind	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	
Graustein Memorial Fund	\$36,000						
Town of Mansfield	\$36,969		\$6,923				Includes in-kind staff time from the IT Director and Human Services Director
Mansfield Public Schools			Staff time				Currently supports three staff members to participate on MAC. MAC will request funds for 2013-14.
Mansfield Public Library			Staff				Participation of Judy Stoughton
Eastern Highlands Health District			Staff				Participation of Ande' Bloom
Early Learning Centers			Staff				Participation of Directors Lisa Dahn and Susan Daley
Mansfield Discovery Depot Early Learning Center			Staff				Participation of Lisa Young and Mary Jane Newman
Parents			Volunteer				Participation of four parents on MAC and teams.
Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis (CCEA)			\$4,020				In-kind support for data collection, development and analyses
University of Connecticut			Staff				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Labs: Anne Bladen and Janice Bolsteridge • Child Development: Jane Goldman • English Department: Professor Tom Deans • Dining Services: Terry Cook
Other sources	\$35,271						Carryover funds from past support from the Graustein Memorial Fund and CHDI
Total:	\$108,240		\$10,943+				

Health Team

Strategy 1: Promote wellness and prevent illness in children 0-8 and their families

- Sub-strategy: Develop and implement “Fit by 4th grade”

Source	2012-13 Support			Budget for Future Years			Additional Detail
	Cash	Redeployed Staff	In-Kind	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	
Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD)	TBD		X				EHHD will develop and introduce “Fit by 4 th ” in the 10 towns it serves. MAC will partner with EHHD to facilitate implementation in the town. This will be accomplished through no-cost/low cost initiatives.
Mansfield Community Center Villari’s, Youth sports programs			X				Asking staff/instructors working with pre-k – grade 4 to incorporate activity/movement/exercises which improve fitness in the domains for physical fitness test. Could be no-cost.
Mansfield BOE/physical education teachers			X				Asking staff/instructors working with pre-k – grade 4 to incorporate activity/movement/exercises which improve fitness in the domains for physical fitness test. Could be no-cost. Advocate for use of Katz Burst of Activity resources in classrooms
Town Campership Initiative	\$600			\$600	\$600	\$600	Funding for a campership for at least one student from each school identified by PE teachers as benefitting from attendance at Camp Mansfield (3 campers per year).
Town Faith Communities	\$600		X	\$600	\$600	\$600	Ask faith communities to include appropriate activities in their children’s programs (Burst of Activity), and raise awareness of initiative. Ask Faith Communities to contribute to camperships.
ECSU/UCONN			X				Partner with appropriate schools to secure internships and or community outreach hours from Physical Education, Sports Medicine Majors who would work with home care providers and provide training and support.
Grants	TBD			TBD	TBD	TBD	Research grants available for fitness initiatives with children.
Total:	\$1,200+			\$1,200+	\$1,200+	\$1,200+	

Successful Learners Team

Strategy 2: Develop an effective Kindergarten Transition Plan

Source	2012-13 Support			Budget for Future Years			Additional Detail
	Cash	Redeployed Staff	In-Kind	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	
CAN partners			X	X	X	X	Staff time needed to develop the plan
Public funding streams				TBD	TBD	TBD	State and district funding that can support implementation of transition plan.
Grants				TBD	TBD	TBD	Cash / funds needed to implement the strategy where the potential funding sources are unknown.
Total:							

Strategy 3: Raise and improve literacy skills in the community

Source	2012-13 Support			Budget for Future Years			Additional Detail
	Cash	Redeployed Staff	In-Kind	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	
Connecticut Humanities Council			X				
Department of Agriculture				TBD	TBD	TBD	Apply for summer food program
CREC				In-kind, books			Applying for Raising Readers facilitator training.
To be determined							Cash / funds needed to implement the strategy where the potential funding sources are unknown.
Total:							

Strategy 4: Improve the quality of early care and education

Source	2012-13 Support			Budget for Future Years			Additional Detail
	Cash	Redeployed Staff	In-Kind	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	
CT State Department of Education	X			X	X	X	State funding to support ongoing professional development
CAN partners			X	In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	Staff time to support meetings and networking
Total:							

Community Connectedness Team

Strategy 5: Improve communications with Mansfield families with young children to raise awareness about community resources

Source	2012-13 Support			Budget for Future Years			Additional Detail
	Cash	Redeployed Staff	In-Kind	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	
Website design			X				Via UConn student intern project.
Strategic branding plan			X				Start with existing resources from the CT Early Childhood Alliance (ECA) and continuing partnership with CCEA.
Focus groups / information gathering			X	\$250	\$250	\$250	In-kind staff time and funds for refreshments for focus group participants.
Communication content			X				MAC and the Community Connectedness Team will develop content.
Printing				\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	Costs for printing products, investigate low-cost printing options (e.g., Coventry EC Collaborative's printer).
Dissemination			X	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	In-kind dissemination of products and messages via MAC members and partner organizations; funds for postage for mass mailings.
Total:				\$3,750	\$3,750	\$3,750	

Strategy 6: Improve transportation options to make key communication locations accessible

Source	2012-13 Support			Budget for Future Years			Additional Detail
	Cash	Redeployed Staff	In-Kind	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	
Safe Routes to School				TBD	TBD	TBD	Consider re-applying for this federal grant
Windham Regional Transit District				In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	Adding routes/stops for apartment complexes, library
Mansfield Tomorrow				In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	Incorporate MAC/community priorities in final plan
Fare Free Program				In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	Maximize use of program among families
Developers				TBD	TBD	TBD	Investigate as potential funders of transportation priorities
Total:							

Strategy 7: Create a community built playground in the heart of Mansfield

Source	2012-13 Support			Budget for Future Years			Additional Detail
	Cash*	Redeployed Staff	In-Kind	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	
Fundraising events	\$1,805			\$10,000	\$10,000	\$5,195	Planning a series of fundraising events
Grants/Foundations	\$0			\$30,000	\$30,000	\$25,000	
Businesses	\$1,025			\$20,000	\$20,000	\$8,975	
Individuals	\$2,852			\$15,000	\$15,000	\$7,148	
Building Supply Companies	\$0			\$0	\$37,500	\$37,500	In-kind donations for equipment, supplies
Pickets / T-shirts / Tiles / Boards	\$1,899			\$10,000	\$10,000	\$6,541	
Components	\$800			\$25,000	\$25,000	\$18,775	
Total:	\$8,381			\$110,000	\$147,500	\$109,134	

* Raised to date as of 3/1/13

C. Data Development Agenda

A **data development agenda** is a list of areas where additional data is needed. While it is nearly impossible to have all the data needed, a data development agenda identifies the highest priority areas for new data collection. Below are the areas where additional data would be useful during implementation of the plan.

Updated Data Agenda

Health

- ▶ Work with partners implementing Fit by 4th Grade to track activities and results of practice physical fitness tests.
- ▶ Work with the district to report and track CT Physical Fitness Test data by sub-populations.

Successful Learners

- ▶ As the state develops a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for early care and education, draw on the state's work to assess the quality of Mansfield's early care and education programs.
- ▶ In conjunction with the development of a Kindergarten Transition Plan, identify performance measures and strategies for collecting data on these indicators.

Community Connectedness

- ▶ Decide on the timing for future Community Connectedness Surveys.
- ▶ Conduct analyses of survey data to assess the utilization of community locations and the effectiveness of community locations in building a sense of connectedness (i.e., the contribution of community resources to community connectedness).

"There is no greater power than a community discovering what it cares about."

~ Margaret J. Wheatley

Photo courtesy of Karen Taylor



D. Performance Measures

As part of this plan, the community of Mansfield committed to establishing performance measures. Performance measures are established to evaluate how well a program, agency, or service system is working. These measures help us understand how much we did, how well we did it, and if anyone is better off as a result of our efforts. Below are initial measures identified by MAC Teams; these will be refined and developed as strategies are fully implemented in collaboration with our implementation partners.

How will we know if anyone is better off as a result of this plan?

Strategy #1: Implement Fit by 4th Grade

How much did we do?	How well did we do it?	Is anyone better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ # of providers participating ▶ # of partners invited ▶ # of children in each age cohort participating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ % of providers participating ▶ % of invited partners participating ▶ % of children in each age cohort participating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ % of children passing practice tests ▶ Use headline indicator to track achievement of overall results

Strategy #2: Develop an effective Kindergarten Transition Plan

- ▶ Performance measures to be developed in conjunction with the creation of the Plan

Strategy #3: Raise and improve literacy skills

- **Books on the Bus**

How much did we do?	How well did we do it?	Is anyone better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ # of Books on the Bus stops ▶ # of people participating in Books on the Bus ▶ # of books borrowed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Brief customer satisfaction survey for Books on the Bus: % rating the program highly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Brief customer satisfaction survey for Books on the Bus: % reading more books, % that would otherwise not be able to go to the library.

Strategy #4: Improve the quality of early care and education

How much did we do?	How well did we do it?	Is anyone better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ # of members of CAN ▶ # of members of Infant-Toddler Community of Practice ▶ # of members of home-based providers network ▶ # of professional development trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ % of participants rating trainings as high quality ▶ % of members rating CAN meetings as very useful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ % of providers reporting that CAN supports helped improve their practices

Strategy #5: Improve communications with Mansfield families

- ▶ Performance measures to be developed in conjunction with the creation of Communications Plan (e.g., # of products, # distributed, # of website hits, % of families reporting that information was useful)

Strategy #6: Improve transportation options to make key community locations accessible

How much did we do?	How well did we do it?	Is anyone better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ # of presentations to community groups on transportation proposals and options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Successful applications to WRTD and Safe Routes to School to improve transportation options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Increase in WRTD routes and usage to key community locations, including the Library▶ Increase in use of new sidewalks

Strategy #7: Create a community built playground

How much did we do?	How well did we do it?	Is anyone better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ # of fundraising events▶ # of individuals and organizations contributing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Total funds raised for playground▶ In-kind contributions for playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Playground completed▶ # of families using playground

E. Governance & Accountability

Definition: Governance means oversight. Governing bodies have the responsibility to oversee, provide direction, and coordinate implementation of certain activities. Governing bodies also have a responsibility to verify whether and to what extent results have been achieved. In most cases, the governing body is straightforward. For example, for non-profits, the Board of Directors has a governing responsibility for the initiatives of that organization. In the case of community planning, the governing entity is not always clear. It is difficult to identify because the plan includes cross-sector initiatives from a wide variety of agencies, institutions, and interests within the community. No one agency can achieve the outcomes on its own. Therefore, this plan requires a governance structure that will provide the most efficient and effective shepherd for this community-wide plan.

MAC Governance: Typically, the governance structure can be formed three different ways: (1) through a connection to local government, operating as an agency of that authority; (2) as a separately-standing legal entity with the ability to accept funds; or (3) as an informal organization without explicit legal standing, where a collaborative group accepts responsibility for oversight of the plan. In Mansfield, there is a hybrid group that already exists – **Mansfield Advocates for Children (MAC)**.

Who will own the plan? Who will coordinate the partners? Who will see it through? Who will report back to the public at regular intervals to explain what results have been achieved? What governance structure is best for this community plan?

MAC serves as an **advisory committee to the Town Council** and its members are appointed by the Mayor and the Town Council. It also functions independently as a **collaborative group**, and often with a separate non-profit fiscal agent. MAC oversees implementation of the plan – encompassing programs and town initiatives for young children including the state’s School Readiness Program.

MAC is the right group to shepherd and guide the implementation of this plan because: (a) it is a pre-existing group; (b) it is recognized by and has productive ties with the local government and school district (e.g., MAC members participate on a variety of town and school district committees including the Human Services Advisory Committee and the district’s School Wellness Committee); (c) it can be easily connected with implementation of key town-wide planning efforts including *Mansfield Tomorrow* (see below); (d) it retains some of the flexibility of an informal structure; (e) it has a ready fiscal agent in the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut; and (f) it currently oversees four Early Care and Education centers in Mansfield. MAC responsibilities include:

- Convening partners
- Coordinating agreement on a set of outcomes
- Coordinating implementation
- Providing direction
- Measuring progress in meeting plan results
- Engaging, educating, and regularly informing the community about progress being made to improve results, including annual reports to the public on performance and results
- Continuously seeking input and feedback on this community-wide effort to improve the health, learning success, and connectedness of children and their families
- Coordinating School Readiness and early care initiatives, including oversight and reporting to the State Department of Education on the program

In 2009, MAC restructured to reflect its oversight of the Plan. In our new organizational chart (see chart on next page), the community is the surrounding entity that informs our work; our three **Teams** corresponding to the three strategic areas – Health, Successful Learners, and Community Connectedness – overlap with community as we draw people and resources from there. The **Executive Council** overlaps with the Teams, with members from the Executive Council serving on teams to ensure smooth operations leading to focused implementation. Each Team has formed a number of **Work Groups** to implement Plan strategies. To ensure coordination of efforts, Mansfield's **School Readiness Council** is a Work Group of the Successful Learners Team. As a community-wide strategic plan, our organizational structure reflects many ways in which the entire community may become involved either in an ongoing way or for a single element of the work.

MAC has two **co-chairs** who have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Meet regularly with the MAC Coordinator to plan, organize and monitor the activities of MAC.
- Assist Coordinator and Director of Human Services (DHS) in determining budget allocation and budget priorities.
- Plan agendas for monthly MAC and Executive Committee meetings.
- Regularly attend and facilitate (as needed) MAC and Executive Committee meetings.
- Provide general support to MAC and Teams.
- Represent MAC in the community through attendance at relevant meetings and activities.
- Attend relevant workshops and training when possible.
- Sign correspondence / materials for MAC when needed. Act as official signatory on grant applications and other documents of official MAC business.
- Assist in the preparation and writing of grants and applications when needed.
- Provide feedback to DHS for the purpose of staff evaluation.

MAC has also developed **tools** to support effective implementation and organizational functioning: (a) Criteria to Consider for Choosing Strategies to Implement the First Two Years; (b) Decision Making Guidelines for Policy Involvement; and (c) MAC Succession Plan for Leadership. Teams have used these tools to eliminate strategies that were not developed enough or did not have the potential sought and to prioritize remaining strategies, and the full MAC uses the Succession Plan to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities along with continuity in leadership.

Finally, MAC has enhanced **membership** to engage broader representation from the community. MAC includes parents, and representatives from key sectors including early care and education and the public schools, health, higher education (faculty, staff and international students from the University of Connecticut), government (including the town and public library), and the community.

Mansfield Advocates for Children (MAC) Organizational Chart



● **Community:** Entire Mansfield Community

● **Mansfield Advocates for Children (MAC):** Total MAC membership as appointed by Mansfield Town Council

Teams:

● **Community Connectedness:** Includes former Membership and Parents Committees.

● **Successful Learners:** Includes former Infant/Toddler and School Readiness Committees

● **Health:** (New Team)

● **MAC Executive Council:** Co-Chairs, Dir. of Human Services, Team Chairs, Coordinator, Collaborative Agent

Reporting and Accountability: Reporting happens on a monthly basis at both the full MAC meetings and at the Executive Council level. MAC also reports to the Town Council and the Board of Education (BOE) at least once a year. There is a representative on MAC from both the BOE and the Executive Council as the Mayor and Superintendent designee which allows for regular updates to occur. All MAC meeting minutes and agendas are posted on the Town web site, and meetings are open to the public. Copies of the minutes are also included in reporting to our grantors annually. The Coordinator participates in quarterly and yearly goal setting and reporting to the Town as part of the Department of Human Services.

MAC will utilize multiple mechanisms to disseminate Plan implementation and progress information to the community and to engage the broader community in dialogue on the Plan:

- **Results Scorecard.** MAC will investigate using the online Results Scorecard (www.resultsscorecard.com) to report on plan progress and promote accountability. The Results Scorecard was developed specifically for RBA and includes easy-to-understand charts and text that describe overall progress on headline indicators, the story behind the numbers, and detailed data on plan strategies (e.g., performance measures). The Scorecard will help MAC partners collaborate and integrate efforts, while ensuring public access to up-to-date information on our plan. MAC will revise existing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with key partners including Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD) and Mansfield Public Schools to incorporate specific data requests (e.g., headline and secondary indicators, performance measures) that feed into the Results Scorecard.
- **Awareness Campaign.** In its analysis of the Community Connectedness Survey, the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis (CCEA) identified the most promising mechanisms for delivering information to different sub-groups (e.g., those earning less than \$75,000, those with or without a college degree). These mechanisms include flyers, newspapers, information distributed at school, the Town website, and through word of mouth. MAC will also disseminate information through the Mansfield Minute (the Town newsletter) and through its partners.
- **Building on Parent / Community Events.** MAC will continue to work with its partners to engage and inform parents. MAC and its partners hold a variety of events for parents and the broader community each year, and can use these events to report on plan progress and distribute information on the Results Scorecard. Opportunities include Week of the Young Child events, MAC meetings with faith leaders, events organized through the University of Connecticut's Work Life Oversight Committee, events for international students and their families (e.g., Asian parents), and town events including Winter Fun Week and the Festival on the Green.

Engagement with *Mansfield Tomorrow*: Mansfield received a federal grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop a “comprehensive plan that will address issues such as where new development should occur, what that development should look like, how to promote local businesses and support farms, how we might make living in Mansfield more affordable for working families, and how to preserve the essential characteristics of our town” (<http://www.mansfieldtomorrow.com/>). This effort, *Mansfield Tomorrow*, builds on the work of Mansfield 2020 and the development of a town center through Storrs Center.

MAC will participate in the planning process to integrate relevant early childhood strategies (e.g., transportation, fitness, playground) into the comprehensive development plan, and to help Mansfield Tomorrow engage a diverse set of families and stakeholders (e.g., faith community) in the planning process. MAC will encourage its members to participate in planning meetings and use online planning tools like the “Mind Mixer.” Mansfield Tomorrow offers an exciting opportunity to implement infrastructure improvements (i.e., sidewalks, playgrounds, bus routes, community hubs) that promote healthy children, successful learners and community connections.

F. Conclusion & Next Steps

This updated plan represents our community's work to date, and incorporates lessons learned from early implementation activities and insights gleaned from additional data collection, analyses and discussions. We look forward to working with all of our community partners to take actions that turn the curve for our children and their families, and hold ourselves accountable for the progress that we make.

For our new initiatives (e.g., Fit by 4th Grade), we will bring together the partners that will be vital to carrying out implementation. In order to do so, the following next steps are needed to put this plan into motion and progress toward improved results:

- ▶ MAC formally accepts responsibility for the Plan's governance.
- ▶ MAC and its Teams identify all partners needed for implementation, approach potential partners, and determine where common interests may lie and where commitments exist.
- ▶ MAC adds new members as needed to support the Plan's oversight and implementation. In some cases, partners may not need to join MAC in order to participate and support implementation (e.g., community agencies sponsoring Fit by 4th Grade activities). In other cases, it may make sense to engage partners more formally on MAC to ensure coordination of efforts (e.g., UConn departments that can support implementation of multiple strategies).
- ▶ With partners, finalize our performance measures and develop specific action plans.
- ▶ All partners implement their portion of the action plans, collecting performance measures and reporting to governing body as agreed upon.

Appendix 1

CHRONICLE ARTICLE ABOUT THE LIBRARY BOOK BUS

CHRONICLE, THE (WILLIMANTIC, CT)

STUDENTS OFFERED BOOKS ON A BUS

By: Caitlin M. Dineen, Chronicle Staff Writer

Published: May 18, 2009

MANSFIELD - Just because *Mansfield* students will be on summer vacation at the end of June does not mean they can avoid books during the break.

Mansfield Board of Education officials are working to make sure library books can be easily accessed throughout the summer. Currently, education officials are hashing out the details for "Books on a Bus." With funding provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, two school buses will be loaded with books and driven around town so pupils from the three elementary schools can check out books without heading to the library.

"It kind of matches the governor's reading program," said Superintendent Frederick Baruzzi. "It makes it more reachable for students." Baruzzi said not all students have access to the public library during the summer and this program caters to them.

According to Baruzzi, routes will begin following the July 4 weekend and will run until the week before school. Pupils from Goodwin, Annie Vinton and Southeast Schools will each have one day a week when a bus will drive on a route designed to supply that school zone with books.

A library assistant from each school will be on the bus during their school's specific day. Baruzzi said each day the buses will follow a specific route and make several stops. Each stop will be approximately 10 to 15 minutes long. He said he anticipates students will check out one or two books at a time, but expects more avid readers will check out four or five.

According to Baruzzi, only one bus will run at a time, but a second bus will be pre-filled with books to replenish the operating bus if book levels become low. He said no limits would be set for the number of books pupils can check out. "We don't want to take away the enthusiasm for reading," he said. As the program will be funded through stimulus grants, Baruzzi said the board has enough funding to operate the program for two summers.

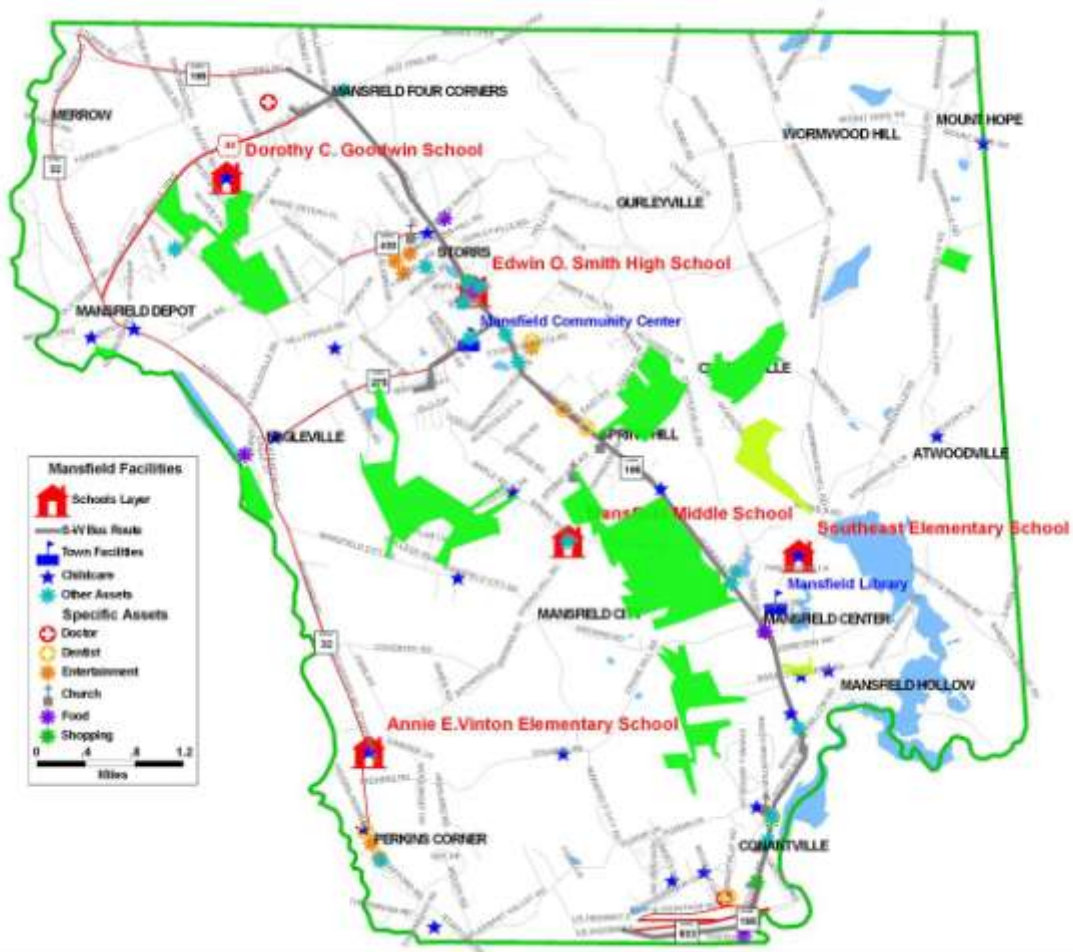
Costs incurred from the program include paying an hourly rate for bus drivers and the library assistants. Each route is expected to take five hours. Although funding will end before the summer of 2011, Baruzzi said if the program is successful the board would look to add funding for it in the town's education budget.

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Appendix 2

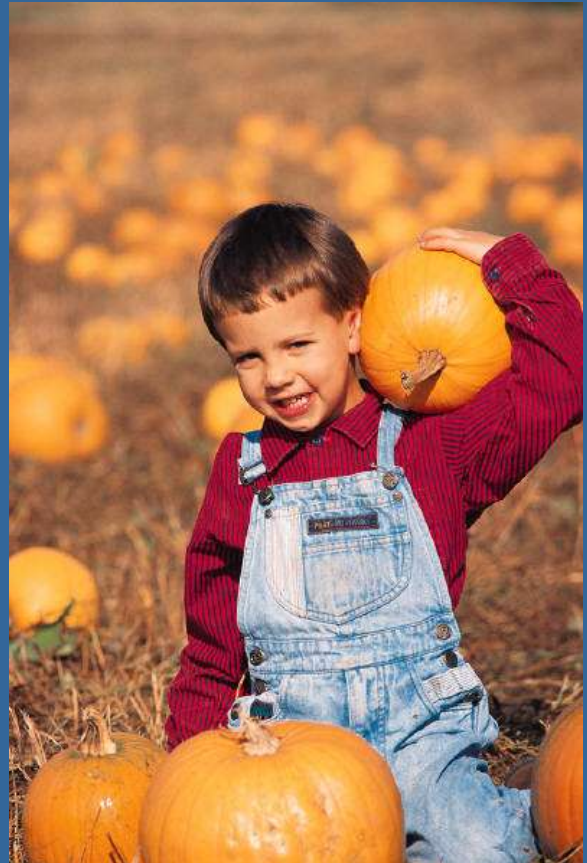
TOWN OF MANSFIELD ASSET MAP

The following map was developed to pinpoint the location of Mansfield's most precious assets. By no means is the map complete, but it provides a starting point for the conversation about how to build a strong community.



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead



UConn Farm and Barn photos courtesy of Art Kostapapas